

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0006/03  
pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure  
by Ruth Hieronymi, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group  
to the Commission

Subject:           Creation of an international instrument for the protection of cultural diversity

The GATS process provides for the constant and progressive liberalisation of the service sector. Hitherto, audio-visual services have been untouched by this process. Some countries, however, have already called for the inclusion of audio-visual services as early as the next round of negotiations, and are endeavouring to find further partners for this initiative.

In addition to its economic dimension, the audio-visual sector is of major cultural importance to the European Union and its Member States. Even incipient liberalisation threatens to weaken the cultural diversity and thus the identity of Europe.

Two related proposals for an international instrument to protect cultural diversity have been drafted by the International Network on Cultural Policy (a governmental organisation) and the International Network for Cultural Diversity (and NGO), which could be linked to the GATS negotiations and are intended to relate to cultural policy in general.

What efforts is the Commission taking to promote the drafting of an instrument for the protection of cultural diversity?

Is the Commission preparing a study in to investigate the legally binding effect or the compatibility and possible linkage of such an instrument with the provisions of GATS?

Tabled: 03.02.2003

Forwarded: 05.02.2003

Deadline for reply: 12.02.2003